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9 November 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Honorable Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Before Mr. Dulles left the city, he asked that our comments on your memorandum of 29 September be pulled together and forwarded.

The attached views may be of some interest to you.

C. P. Cabell  
General, USAF  
Acting Director

NSC  
REVIEW  
COMPLETE  
D. 06/26/03.

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Remarks:

Dick:

The Director pulled this one out of his basket late Saturday afternoon and noted he had not had an opportunity to do anything about it although he did feel that we should make some comment on Arthur Schlesinger's memo. He recalled that at one time you had indicated ~~you had indicated~~ you had some views and has therefore asked that, if you have not already done so, your views be provided to Mr. Schlesinger.

JSE

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

October 2, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Honorable Allen W. Dulles

I would welcome any comment on  
the attached memorandum.



Arthur Schlesinger, jr.  
Special Assistant  
to the President

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NSC REVIEW  
COMPLETED.  
06/26/03.

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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September 29, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Organizing the Democratic  
Parties of the World

1. The Soviet Union enjoys one striking advantage over the United States in waging political warfare: the fact that it has at its disposal two mechanisms for its operations in other countries -- not only the official government apparatus, but also the 'unofficial' apparatus of the Communist Party. This ability to work through eighty-nine national Communist parties with a membership of millions has obviously vastly increased the USSR's effectiveness in mobilizing support for its policies around the world. In effect, a world civil war is going on in which one side has a unified international instrumentality and the other a dispersed collection of political fragments. One of our basic weaknesses in the competition with the USSR is the absence of any organized mass movement willing to be identified with US ideals.

2. Yet there are through the world a great many national parties committed to social reform within a framework of individual rights and representative institutions. These parties contain individuals of devotion, character and courage. They contain ideas uniquely capable of countering the appeal of Communism to intellectuals, workers and the underprivileged. Even though it is not possible to subject these popular democratic parties to centralized international discipline on the Communist model, they represent a potentially valuable, if thus far largely unexploited, resource for our political warfare.

3. What is our interest with regard to the popular democratic parties? Obviously it is to strengthen them as much as possible -- both their organization and their commitment to democratic ideals. Thus far we have tried to do this indirectly. An ultimate objective of our aid programs, for example, is to create a healthy economic and

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social environment in which democratic political parties would flourish. Similarly our cultural exchange programs are designed in part to educate people for democratic political responsibilities. But none of these programs can succeed without effective political leadership. And, if the end product of these efforts is supposed to be the creation of free political society, why need we confine ourselves to promoting effective political leadership through indirect methods? The Communists have not so limited themselves. Why would it not advance our interests to provide direct assistance to pro-democratic parties?

4. What do these parties need?

(a) They need training in political techniques -- in the development of leadership; in modes of organization; in working the precincts and the grass roots; in the use of press, radio and pamphlets; in the production of political education materials; in organizing workers, peasants, students, women; in dealing with Communist efforts at opposition or infiltration; in general, in the practical problems of establishing an effective party structure.

(b) They need money to support their organization, party press and radio, etc. One of the ironies of our present world is that the New Frontier parties often lack the economic means to compete in their own countries either with the right-wing parties, financed by the local oligarchies, or with the left-wing parties, financed by Moscow or Peking.

(c) They need a consolidation of their intellectual position. Some pro-democratic leaders, especially in the new nations, are excessively abstract and rhetorical in their approach to politics. Their programmatic thought is exhausted in such slogans as 'economic development,' 'land reform,' 'industrialization.' They require not only a firmer understanding of democratic philosophy but education in the identification of practical issues and in the formulation of concrete programs. This means training in such areas as economic theory, public administration, history of political parties, agrarian reform, economic development, community organization, labor organization, international relations, etc.

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(d) They need moral assistance -- i. e., they must be assured that they have friends in other countries, especially in the United States, and that history is moving in their direction. Especially in the underdeveloped nations, the pro-democratic leaders often have a terrible feeling of isolation. The oligarchs call them 'Communists'; the Communists call them 'camp-followers of American imperialism'; and their natural allies -- the American people -- have remained largely unaware of their existence and indifferent to their struggles. Indeed, the local American business community and, on occasion, the US Embassy have often displayed far more sympathy with the local oligarchy than with the popular democratic parties.

What is required, in short, is a program of technical, economic, intellectual and moral assistance to democratic political parties on terms consistent with their own sense of dignity and honor and designed ultimately to create a worldwide popular movement of pro-democratic forces.

5. It should be noted that the time for launching such a program could hardly be more propitious. The change of administration in the United States has immensely increased the appeal of American ideals to the world. The rise of the New Frontier has greatly multiplied our points of contact abroad with intellectuals, trade unions, underdeveloped countries, etc. As in the days of Wilson and of Roosevelt, we have once again a chance to regain the leadership of the non-Communist progressive elements everywhere. Because of this change in atmosphere, democratic parties in many countries feel much less compromised by American associations and are even eager for American support. I have seen in recent months a number of proposals from democratic leaders in Europe, Latin America and Asia looking to the establishment of an "Association of Free Democratic Parties" or a "Democratic International." Such a grouping already exists in rudimentary form in Latin America (INADESMO -- the Inter-American Democratic Social Movement).

6. Obviously this attempt to mobilize the parties committed to libertarian and progressive goals cannot be achieved on a government-to-government basis. It can be achieved only to a limited extent on a government-to-party (i. e., covert) basis. While such covert assistance may be necessary for emergencies, or for general training programs, it is corrupting and demoralizing when it becomes routine.

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Still democratic ingenuity can surely devise some way by which we can give our political friends one-tenth the backing which the Communists give theirs and do so with appropriate respect for their sense of pride and independence. For the sake of clarifying some of the issues, I would like to suggest a minimum, an interim and a maximum program.

7. The minimum program would involve the utilization of one of our most neglected instruments of international political warfare -- that is, the Democratic Party. That Party, after all, is the oldest political party in continuous existence. It has given the world in this century the two dominating principles on which the future is most likely to be organized -- the idea of international association; and the idea of a mixed economy based on limited government intervention in economic life to guarantee minimum levels of employment, welfare and security. The Democratic Presidents who particularly symbolized these ideas, Wilson and Roosevelt, are still names to conjure with in large areas of the world.

Yet, despite the impact on the world of these traditions, contributions, leaders, the Democratic Party as such does practically nothing in the international sphere. Political leaders from all over the world come through Washington in search of aid, counsel, friendship -- the Democratic National Committee has no official designated to receive them, advise them, befriend them. As a consequence, we have missed extraordinary opportunities to establish ties -- of a sort which cannot be established by the government itself -- with the political leadership of pro-democratic parties. We have thereby deprived ourselves of important possibilities for exerting influence abroad; and we have considerably reduced our chance of fostering a pro-democratic mass movement to compete with the mass movement of the Communists.

It is easy to see why this condition exists, and it is obviously the fault of no one over at the Committee. (As individuals, indeed, some people at the Committee have done their best to meet the needs of foreign visitors.) The Committee's traditional job is to win elections in the United States, and it has rightly concentrated on that. But the world is changing; national politics have become increasingly internationalized, whether we like it or not; and surely the time has come for the Demo-

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cratic National Committee to establish an International Bureau charged with developing relationships on an informal basis with pro-democratic leaders and parties and with pressing New Frontier ideas through the world.

I even have a candidate for the job -- Neil Staebler of Michigan. He is already interested in the general area and, I understand, is at the moment on a world tour. He can handle questions of organization as well as of ideology; he would be personally effective in dealing with politicians from other countries; and I think he would fully understand the importance and urgency of the assignment.

If the Republican Party wanted to establish a similar bureau, so much the better.

8. An interim program might well envisage the setting up of regional training institutes on the model of the Institute of Political Education in Costa Rica. The San Jose Institute is already doing a job of great importance in training democratic leadership for Latin America. It has also proposed a program of expanded activity in the future, including the establishment of regional institutes in other parts of Latin America and the creation of a publications center to advance democratic ideas and policies.

The establishment of comparable institutes under indigenous direction in Asia and Africa might have a decisive effect on the future of democracy in those continents. Had the San Jose Institute been in operation a decade ago, for example, the evolution of the Cuban Revolution might have been considerably different, and the problems of a transition to democracy in the Dominican Republic today might have been less acute.

9. The maximum program would have to be worked out experimentally; but, in the long run, it would seem to me that we might consider heading toward some sort of Democratic International. A non-governmental organization of free political parties could promote the understanding of democratic ideals and practices, assist democratic parties and regimes threatened by totalitarian forces, discuss problems of democracy in lands lacking antecedent democratic traditions and strengthen the morale and sense of common purpose among all those striving in the democratic cause.

6.

Obviously the idea of a Democratic International raises difficult problems and therefore must be approached with the most careful consideration. Some of the problems are:

a) Should the association include all democratic political parties, conservative and liberal? or should it be confined to liberal democratic parties? (The best way of solving this problem might be to frame a statement of principles and open membership to all parties prepared to adhere to the statement.)

b) Should the association be on regional lines, or should it begin as a world organization? (My guess is that regional beginnings are necessary in order to test the vitality of the association.)

c) What should the relationship be with social democratic parties and with the now moribund Second International? (Most 'socialist' parties today, like the British Labour Party and the German SPD, have abandoned the principles of classical socialism and are, in essence, mixed-economy, welfare-state parties.)

d) Should the association be loose and fraternal? or should it aim toward common programs and policies?

10. The formulation of the maximum program must await greater knowledge and experience. But an International Bureau could be set up right away in the Democratic National Committee; and the experience of this office could provide some idea of the feasibility of more far-reaching steps. Whoever heads the office might have in mind the objective at some future time of calling a World Congress of pro-democratic parties and leaders to proclaim the principles of social change for and by democracy and to affirm faith in the world of choice and the open society. The World Congress might lead to the establishment of a permanent international organization of education and action on behalf of democracy and freedom.

Arthur Schlesinger, jr.

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